

## Chapter III

### Rationality and Choice

#### Rationality and Non-rationality

In the previous chapter I outlined six positions which I called non-rational in contrast to both rational and irrational decisions and actions. They were depicted by the substantive character of the decisions rather than the form of reasoning used.

In order to analyze the character and form of rational decisions, it will be helpful if we first clarify the formal characteristics of patriotic and moralistic anti-war decisions, of sceptical and empirical instrumental reasoning, of external and internal historicism. If readers find this chapter too abstract and intellectually dense, they may find it easier to skip this chapter and deal with the same issues when they are directly applied to the concrete problem of authorizing the use of military force.

The formal elements of the different ways individuals approach problems will be approached from four different angles. In the next section we will distinguish reasons from causes by contrasting events and actions and the difference between looking at something from the inside outwards or from the outside looking in. In the section which follows we will contrast universalist versus communitarian approaches and explore the relationship of rationality and values. After that we will contrast reasoning and logic to argue that just because someone is logical does not mean s/he is reasonable. Finally, we will distinguish between rationalization and rationality and, in the process, put forward a model of reflexive rationality.

#### Actions and Decisions

Collingwood made a distinction between the 'inside' or 'thought side' of an action and the 'outside' or physical side of an action. "An action is the unity of the outside and the inside of an event."<sup>1</sup> Caesar's physical passage with his men across the Rubicon is a mere event. When we also look at the reasons why Caesar crossed, when we examine the thought behind the conduct, we focus on the inside of that action. An action depicted only in terms of physical motion is a mere event. A full depiction of an action must also include the inside or thought side - the motives and purposes of the agent. In William Dray<sup>2</sup>, an action has all the characteristics of an event, but, in addition, has a thought-side made up of goals and any policies qualifying those goals.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the actual use of military force in the Gulf War that we see on our television screens, for philosophers, is a

mere event. Yet when the ordinary man in the street thinks of all the activity and ordinance employed in the war, which includes the use of Flying Tankers, B-52 bombers, stealth bombers, F/A-18 Hornets, F-14 Tomcats, EA-6B Prowlers, F-4G Wild Weasel, Tornado GR1 jets, French Jaguars, F-4, F-14 and F-15 Eagle and F-16 fighters, Buccaneers, F-15E and A-6 Intruder fighter bombers, CF-18s, F-15s, Mirage 51s, EF-111 Ravens and FB-111 bombers, Apache helicopters, SCUDs and tomahawk cruise surface or sea-launched missiles, SAM (surface to air), SLAM (standoff land attack), TLAM (tactical land attack missiles), HARM (high speed anti-radiation missiles) and sparrow and sidewinder short-range heat seeking air to air missiles, Patriot anti-missile missiles, antitank mines and trenches, bunkers, ZSU-23 anti-aircraft guns and Triple-A, T-72 and M-1 tanks and personnel carriers, battleships, cruisers, destroyers, frigates, auxiliary and hospital ships amphibious landing craft, TNC-45 missile attack craft (Iraqi) and submarines, smart bombs and dumb bombs - all that activity is called THE ACTION. Dogfights, bogeys, bandits and furballs (lots of dogfights at the same time) added to our lexicon of action.

When we learned about synthetic aperture radar guidance systems or SARs and AWACs (airborne warning and control system planes), Lantirn (low-altitude navigation targetting infrared night guidance systems), ECM (electronic counter measures to confuse radar) and ECCM (electronic counter counter measures), Sigint (signals intelligence monitoring of enemy communications), Navcent (the US naval command), MIF (the Maritime Interdiction Force), Centaf (Central Air Force Command - US), Canforme (Canadian Forces Middle East Headquarters in Bahrain), JSTARS (the Joint surveillance and target attack radar systems, a new language for communication and command systems became part of our discourse. We learned new euphemisms -friendly fire (fire power that killed your own troops) and collateral damage (non military and non strategic property damage and civilian deaths). We learned about Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm and, if you were a Canadian, Operation Scimitar and Operation Friction for the Canadian portion of the same thing.

But if we wanted to learn about the intentions and goals we of all that activity, we listened to the military spokesmen and the politicians explain why this or that ordinance was being employed.

Action in the philosophical world is the inversion of what we mean by action in the ordinary world. Action movies are those with lots of violence, rapid movements, fights, shootings, car chases, etc. where the underlying premise is that the viewer is expected to leave his or her thinking caps at home. For philosophers, what we see out there - all that firepower, all that destruction, all that death - they are all mere events. To be an action, the thoughts of the agent, the intention and goals, at the very least, must be part of the depiction. When

we only see the physical activity, or read the physical description, what occurs is a mere event.

In fact, some philosophers are even more perverse. Inaction and unobservable or non-overt behaviour is sometimes referred to as an action because the essential component of an action - the thought side - was said to be present.<sup>4</sup> My own conviction is that this absurdity simply carries to its logical conclusion what Michael Bratman called, "the methodological priority of intention in action."<sup>5</sup> Instead of conceiving of action as a whole of which intentions are a part - the thought side - we turn directly to intentions as separate 'events' from the action. Elizabeth Anscombe does this in Intention.<sup>6</sup> Donald Davidson operates on the same presumption.<sup>7</sup> Thus, we may begin with the *intention* of turning on a computer, the *belief* that if I plug it in and turn on the switch the computer will come on, then the resultant rational decision will be to plug in the computer and turn the switch on. In the more complex Gulf War, the intention is to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait and the belief may be that if sufficient force is utilized Hussein will leave or be pushed out, therefore the decision is made to use that military force. We construct a simple syllogism modled like a causal sequence. But it only appears to work because we seem to have characterized the intention as a separate entity from the action itself. In fact, the rational process of decision does not follow this simple deduction at all as we shall attempt to show.

If abstracting intentions from an action, as if they were a separate entity in the head creates one problem, conceiving of reasons as external entities commits the complementary error. Getting Hussein out of Kuwait is a reason for using military force in the Gulf. That is, the intention is conceived as an external reason sitting in a cage like a puppy dog in a pet shop which I may or may not adopt as mine.<sup>8</sup> The intention is offered as something standing outside the agent's head. Do you or don't you want to expell Hussein from Kuwait? There is no rational deliberation about that choice. You either want the puppy dog or you don't. Reasoning and acting only follow if the choice is first made to adopt that external intention. Reasoning is necessarily reduced to an instrumental calculation and the choice of goals becomes arbitrary.

One fallacious move is to think of choice as an item to be selected on a supermarket shelf rather than an internal process. A second fallacious move is to consider intentions, not merely as distinguishable, but as seperable elements from the choice. What we can separate are four kinds of choices, three of which are decisions per se and one of which is the action which entails physical activity.

The decisions the members of Congress made have to be distinguished from any action following from the decision.

Congress, by a majority vote, decided to authorize the President, under certain mild qualifications and imperatives critical to an interpretation of the constitutional role of Congress, to use force to get Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. The action was an action to authorize, and the decision of Congress was effectively made, pending merely the signature of the President himself, which was a foregone conclusion. The decision of Congress was effectively equivalent to the action.<sup>9</sup> If Congress had decided not to authorize the President, it too would have been effectively the expression of the authority of Congress because the status of that resolution did not require the signature of the President, but the status of that authority would have been somewhat different than the resolution supporting the President which in whole and in all its parts had the effect of being a law.

The decision of Congress also has to be differentiated from the decision of each of the members of Congress.<sup>10</sup> Each member present was required to decide whether to vote to authorize the President to use force or to deny such authorization at the time. These were not the only possible actions Congress could have taken. Nor did the decisions have to entail the qualifications that those Resolutions did. Explaining the formulation of the two major resolutions in the way they were formulated and the decision to restrict the debate without any opportunity to amend to those two formulations would provide material for a different analysis of explanation. Since only a few of the reasons for those formulations were made public, that is not the decision with which we are concerned. We are concerned with the justifications and explanations of the Congressmen for supporting one of the resolutions and voting against the other. (This is not absolutely true since Senator Hatfield voted against both Resolutions since he was opposed to any use of force at any time.)

There were effectively only two alternatives before Congress.

The members of Congress were not deciding what was the best thing to do under the circumstances given each of the members intentions and beliefs. They were deciding to do one thing or the other. They were not deciding what was the best thing to do. The former is a decision to act; the latter is a *deliberative decision to determine which* possibility is the best choice. They are two very different types of decision. A deliberative decision which weighs all the alternatives to decide what would be the best choice is very different than a decision to do, a decision to act one way or another as provided for in the Resolutions available. The latter are situations most common to politicians. They are faced with very limited choices in the final analysis. They can vote for Proposition A, Proposition B or abstain. None of these may be what they would regard as the best choice possible. What they are deciding if they have thought about it and determined what

the best alternative would be for them is, given the alternatives available and the circumstances, what alternative would they prefer to see implemented. The formulation of what was the best thing to do and what to do could have been precisely the same for some of the members, but it need not have been and probably was not for the majority of the members.

One more type of decision needs to be differentiated from both a deliberative decision about what is the best thing to do and a decision to do something given the alternatives available. That is a decision about the basis for making the decision, including the processes to be used and the procedural norms to follow as well as the values and principles which will be operative to determine what is the best thing to do and what to do. These decisions about norms, about which behavioural modes will be considered normative, which norms are to be considered 'rational', are most fundamental. "To think something rational is to accept norms that permit it."<sup>11</sup>

They are not only factors taken into consideration as part of the belief structure of the various agents, but the very decision itself reaffirms or can reconfigure the value priorities of a particular agent.

A common presumption in contemporary political theory is that norms are not operative in the field of international politics. Only coercive power and economic interests matter. As we shall try to show later, one of the key factors in the decision had to take into account that the decision was part of the process of institutionalizing legal authority norms in the international political arena. In other words, the decision was not just a matter of what norms each individual would base his or her decisions on, but what norms would become operative in a world political community which was believed to be emerging.<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that decisions about norms usually lead to the most profound changes in formal authority structures.<sup>13</sup> Further, the most flexible as well as effective normative control mechanisms are those which are internalized and which allow decisions to be adjusted based on the non-alignment of anticipations and emerging situations.<sup>14</sup>

We have distinguished between actions, action-decisions, deliberative decisions and normative decisions. We have distinguished between actions and events, noting that a mere event is only the outside of an action while an action has an inside or a thought side which include intentions and beliefs. In order to provide the ground for the discussion of authoritative legal norms in the international field, I now want to make a parallel distinction between internal and external factors that enter into making a decision. There are authority factors, influence factors and power factors, each with an internal and an external dimension.

In offering reasons for their decision, many of the members of Congress offered the words of historians - Thucydides is one example I give in the analysis of the case - and other experts. Many military figures and former cabinet ministers, particularly former Ministers of Defence and Secretaries of State, were cited for their opinions on both side of the debate, but the most frequent figure that I believe was cited was the analysis made by Judge Webster, the head of the CIA, both from his testimony before the Armed Services Committee and in a letter he wrote on the second day of the debate which provided his assessment of the effects of economic sanctions on the military and economic capacity of Iraq. These authority figures were cited for their expertise and insight. The belief in the verity and value of what they said constitutes an expert authority source and an internal belief factor in affecting the decision of the member of Congress.

This authoritative belief in a fact or an anticipated outcome (or in some cases a value) is to be contrasted with a formal authority who, from his or her position, commands that a certain decision be made. Such a formal authority would be an external factor affecting the decision. Since the party whips were not used in this vote and many, many of the members went to great lengths to stress that each individual was making a decision on his or her own responsibility without some authority instructing them how to vote, this external factor can, at least in the first instance, unless evidence is available to the contrary, be discounted as affecting the decision. The issue of formal authority did, however, influence the actual decision to be made. For there had traditionally been a struggle between Congress and the President on whether Congress had the exclusive responsibility to declare war. (Why the President's action in imposing an economic embargo, which is generally considered an act of war, was not challenged as following within the exclusive prerogative of Congress, I was not able to ascertain.) This was a struggle over formal authority which influenced the resolutions, their wording and the order upon which the members voted, but no one in formal authority appeared to try to affect the vote per se.

Though one often uses the phrase that those whose expertise was cited influenced the decision, in our terms we will be more precise. An expert and an intellectual influence will be differentiated as follows. An expert is cited for information about a particular fact or an expected outcome or, as I said, even a value assessment such as what characterizes a just war, though the latter was rarely if ever utilized in this debate. An intellectual influence is cited for the argument utilized which persuaded the member of Congress. When James Baker was cited after the breakdown of the talks with Aziz and his assessment that he detected not a whit of give in

the Iraqi position, he is being cited as an expert, a source of authentic authority about a fact, which could or could not be accurate. When President Bush is cited for his belief that if the threat of war is made more real for Saddam Hussein that will improve the possibilities of peace, however slim those possibilities are, "because the only thing SADDAM understands is force", then Bush is serving as an 'intellectual' influence. When a constituent is cited for saying to a member of Congress, "Make sure we don't go to war; make sure my boy on the S.S. Saratoga does not come home in a body bag", that is considered an emotional influence on the heart strings of the Congressman or woman. In either case, the influence is an internal one affecting or reinforcing the beliefs of the agent.

An external influence is a material rather than an intellectual or emotional one or one which influences by example. A payoff is a material influence, which was the concern of the inquiry of the Ethics Committee in the Senate into the Keating-five. If the influence is a matter of withholding votes or promising a vote, it is also an external one. It is influence as pressure. Internal influences act by persuasion. Internal influences are those which effect the beliefs of the agent; external influences are those which only influence the actions of the agent.

Power too has an internal aspect and an external one. If Saddam Hussein says that unless Kuwait cedes territory to give Iraq access to the Gulf, Iraq will invade Kuwait (assuming that Iraq was even 'kind' enough to actually bother to threaten Kuwait), then that is an external dimension of power. When the United States threatens to use military force to expel Iraq from Kuwait and does, under the auspices of the United Nations, use force to enforce an economic embargo on Iraq, then those actions and threats employ coercive external power. Some believe that coercive power is the only relevant operating factor. "We define rational political action as action which is motivated by the pursuit of power payoffs which result from control of political office."<sup>15</sup> When supposed scholars adopt the view that all politics in the domestic as well as the international arena (as we already suggested, we will try to demonstrate that this is no longer the case even in the international arena) is simply a matter of coercive power, we get reductionist nonsense.

Power is internal when the speakers, particularly near the end of the debate, congratulated themselves for taking the responsibility and summoning the concentration, the energy, the stamina, the will to decide for themselves whether military force ought or ought not to be used. Power, in the internal sense, is the creative energy believed to exist within each of us. It is not inherently and need not become coercive when it is externalized.<sup>16</sup>

What made the debate so fascinating was not only the importance of the issue but its very high tone and its apparent freedom from external authority, influence and power factors which do not affect beliefs but only the behaviour of the agent with the responsibility of making the decision. That is also what makes the case so excellent as a basis for analyzing the nature of justification and rational explanation.

## Beliefs and Reasons

The general framework for justification appears to be precisely the same as that which is usually referred to as 'rational explanation' or 'intentionalist explanations'. That is, explanations that historians use in terms of the beliefs or thoughts of the agent. Given the goals of the agent and his or her beliefs about the situation, including the anticipated outcomes of the alternative choices available to him\her, and the values held by the agent applicable to those choices, those Beliefs<sup>1</sup> are used to justify or explain the decision to take or authorize an action.<sup>17</sup> The framework consists of four main categories of Belief: Goals or Objectives and the Qualification to those goals, Norms both of conduct and decision making, perceptions of the past and current situation, including the means available to achieve the Goal, together referred to as the Conditions, and the anticipated and possible Consequences of the decision. Those four categories can be configured as follows:

### The Framework of Justification and Rational Explanation

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Future</u>
<u>Values</u>	Norms - of conduct = policy	Goals - ultimate &
immediate	- of speech = procedural	Qualifications
<u>Facts</u>	Conditions - current	Consequences -
direct	& past	- long
term	- means	&

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<sup>1</sup> I use beliefs with a small 'b' to indicate what the agent thought the situation was and what its expected consequences would be. I use Beliefs with a capital 'B' to stand for all the thoughts of the agent, including his/her goals and norms applicable to judging the situation, as well as the beliefs about the situation and its anticipated outcomes.



indirect

available

Now these Beliefs may be conventionally held or established and even verified. They may also may be subjective beliefs. The fact that they are established - such as the belief in the superiority of the white race so prevalent in the thirties in the Western World - does not mean they are true. It does mean they do not belong to the subjective realm since the community acts to confirm what is believed even if it is false.

Further, some of the Beliefs are proximate to the action while others are more remote. I am not merel speaking of the difference between ultimate goals - establishing a new world order - and immediate goals - getting Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, and immediate and long term consequences, but procedural norms which are more remote from the issue than the policy norms implicit in the debate.

The specification of Beliefs can become more detailed and more complicated. A decision may be about doing something, about what the best thing to do is or about the normative basis for making a decision. A policy norm may be about procedures (agreeing to back whatever the majority decision is), or, as in this case, about the best technique to achieve a given end. It may not appear to be about the objectives but an analysis may indicate that a debate about objectives was central to the debate. It may also be about anticipated consequences. As we will try to indicate in the next chapter, the debate was really about all of these even though it was cast in the form about the best means to achieve an agreed upon end. Thus, the debate about what action to take is not simply about the outside or physical behaviour to perform, but about norms and goals, the past, present and the future.

The following chart attempts to incorporate all of these factors into a visual schema:

[INSERT CHART]

### **Formal and Substantive Rationality**

Antigone and the anti-war party, sceptics and internalist historicists all give priority to the internal components of the soul, whether they be sentiments of the heart, passions or ideas in the head. Creon and other Patriots in stressing civic duty, Empirical instrumental calculators stressing material interests, and externalist historicists such as Turner and his geographical theory of the role of the frontier in forging the American character, all stress the primacy of external factors in influencing the actions we take. The issue is one of priority not exclusivity. The externalists will tend to reduce

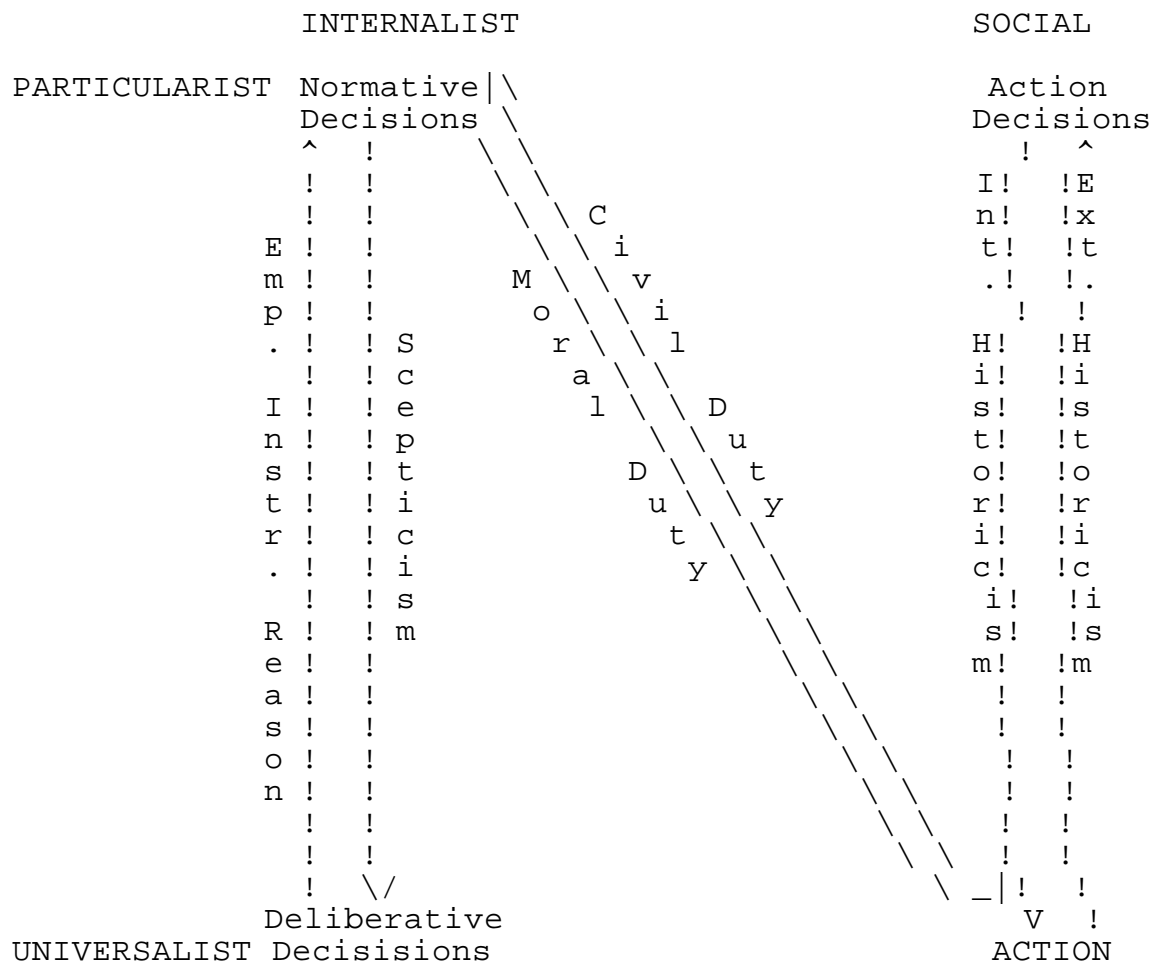
reasons or beliefs to a subspecies of cause. Internalists will stress the independence of beliefs from external causes. The difference is primarily about the direction in how the inside of an action is oriented to the outside.

The six schools of nonrational action can also be distinguished in a second way, by the type of decision they each stress. In Antigone and Creon, an action is a mode of giving witness to the norms to which one is committed; the primacy is placed on normative commitments. In the case of the sceptics and those committed to instrumental reasoning based on the analysis of the empirical conditions, the stress is on deciding the best thing to do. Decision making is primarily a deliberation about choosing the best means given a chosen end. From the historicist perspective, given the values and convictions of the parties as imbued by the society, or even the conflicting ways of seeing the world inherited from the process of social formation or the intellectual ideas of our ancestors, then the decision will merely be one of assessing which of the alternatives before us best suits the inherited way we see the world. The decision will neither be normative nor deliberative but will be an action-decision, a decision to do 'A' or 'B'.

The six schools can be distinguished in a third way. To what extent do the decisions make universalist or merely particularist claims. All six schools make universalist claims about their conclusions. For those impelled by duty, they know the values they hold, the social values to which they are committed, are not held universally, but both the believers in moral duty and the believers in civil duty are convinced that the values they hold *ought* to be universal. Their action gives expression to the will to actualize that universality. The sceptics believe that although the passions and convictions we hold are socially conditioned, there are universal laws which can be discerned to understand and predict how people will always or probably behave because the laws governing passions are universal. The empirical instrumentalists hold that everyone is a possessive individualist out to maximize his or her personal material interests and therefore will deliberate in precisely the same way given the perception of those interests. What is particular and relative to anyone is the particular norms and perceptions that individual has of the world given the way s/he was habituated or the material conditions in which one finds oneself. Even the historicists believe that the conclusions they derive from the particular way they have of perceiving the world has a universalist claim precisely because, built into the particular intellectual or material conditioned mode of seeing the world is a claim that it is the best. Thus, though America was shaped by the frontier, that conditioning gave American's their essential faith in the highest and most universal value, liberty from coercive restraints. Similar, if America was shaped by the

ideas of John Locke, it too gave Americans a claim that those ideas embodied universal truths about human nature. Any actions consistent with that understanding of what it is to be human, had to have universal validity. Thus, every perspective comes to the conclusion that the decision they make or the action they take has universal validity.

The above three ways of understanding the six schools can be depicted by the following schema in which the direction of the arrows indicate whether that particular non-rational perspective is internalist or externalist while the corner locations indicate the primary decision type, while the location in the upper versus the lower half indicate whether the beginning and end points are universalist or particularist.



## Rationality and Reasonableness

If, for the patriots and moralists, sceptics and historicists, there really is no individual choice, that perspective runs contrary to what the average American believes. Fundamental to the American psyche is a faith in

liberty. Liberty is the freedom to choose. And choice requires both knowledge upon which to base judgement and values which provide Americans with a solid ground of conviction. Most Americans believe they both can and should decide what is the right thing to do, though they delegate that responsibility to elected representatives and then observe the process to see if they agree with the decision that is taken.

This does not mean that rationality is differentiated from the pursuit of wealth. As C.B. Macpherson depicted the essence of a capitalist state built on the Lockean model, the roots of the sovereign power of the state rested on a concept of man who is, "essentially a purposive, rational creature, but the essence of rational behaviour was increasingly held to lie in unlimited individual appropriation."<sup>18</sup> If that man is distracted from the pursuit of wealth by the perceived need to protect the ability to engage in that pursuit, that is, in Lockean terms, in the protection of 'freedom', then the goal is redefined in moral terms, but rationality continues to be perceived as the instrument for deciding the means to pursue the goal of accumulating wealth even if, in order to secure that pursuit, the rationality has to shift to other pursuits as well, such as the science and politics of war.

When rationality is reduced to instrumentality and explicated to be a product of a capitalist system, we have a substantive theory of rationality (concrete material circumstances determine a particular 'rationality') as well as a substantive theory of society (societies are different, in this case, dependent on the system of ownership and control of property). This is **not**, of course, how Americans think of themselves. They view themselves as embodying what is universal in all humans, that is, they reason just like everyone else if they reason properly. Further, the values they hold are universal and true and **not** relative to their existing society. They have a conception of themselves which presupposes both a formal theory of rationality and of society. It is not surprising then that the major debate in America in the philosophical theory of rationality has been between two versions of rational and normative formalism. Both stand in opposition to the historicist who holds that rationality is particular to a particular society and the norms of society are a product of the economic or other material conditions (such as geography) of that society.

Instead of defining rationality in terms of an instrumental version of rationality, the analysis of means to pursue a purpose, one which is particular to a capitalist society ("blood for oil") in the historicist conception, or defining rationality as a formal process of calculation which is universal to all humans in order to pursue goals which are freely adopted as the highest values which should be made universal for all societies (freedom, the sanctity of the

nation-state) in the formalist conception, rationality can be defined as the process of finding a means that will be the least incompatible between different sets of goals and values. Where those purposes are not elevated to universality nor reduced to a product of the material circumstances of that society, but are viewed as being freely chosen to at least serve a vision which aspires to universality while, at the same time, recognizing that the vision is also a product of particular historical influences which may colour or distort the vision, then we have a conception of *reasonableness*.

That conception is the inverse of the sceptical position which holds a formalist theory of society (differences between societies are irrelevant to the comprehension of human nature) and a substantive theory of rationality where reason is simply an instrumental device to achieve goals defined elsewhere. In a *reasonable* conception of rationality, societies have different values and norms as products of their history and material circumstances (geography, economic mode of organization), but reasoning is not simply instrumental in achieving particular values, but reasoning affects and can alter the values we hold **even if we believe the values we hold are immutable, unchangeable and eternal**. Those shifts may take place because of the incongruencies unveiled by the reasoning process, both in the logic of reasoning itself and between previous results of that reason in encountering reality.

Reasonableness is a conception of rationality which is **not** instrumental in terms of choosing the means to reach an agreed goal rooted in principle. Reasonableness is the consideration of various points of view in order to work out a compromise which will have repercussions on the definition of the goal and the norms held by the parties to the agreement. In contrast to America, Canada, as an example, was constituted on a policy of accommodation rather than on an elaboration of principles and devising the means to live up to those principles. Whereas Thomas Paine had observed that the uniqueness of the American Revolution rested precisely on its being a revolution in the principles and practices of government, George Brown, one of Canada's founding fathers and a strident voice of reform, saw a Canada where conscience did **not** reside in the hearts of the people, in popular will, but in 'his majesty's loyal opposition', in parliamentary debate, in rational dialogue and in responsible government. "The Reform party that went on to Dominion and Ontario politics with Confederation would profess the mid-Victorian parliamentary democracy of George Brown, not the elective democracy of the neighbouring American republic."<sup>19</sup>

Reasonableness is the ideology of the Whigs. American revolutionaries were not Whigs; they were Liberals. Though both had to overcome the ancient doctrine of the divine right of kings in order to vest sovereignty in the people, in the

Liberal tradition, the sovereign people, through their representatives, directly produced a constitution and constructed the institutions of government. Government was the direct product of the application of first principles. In the Whig interpretation, the rationale for government per se was rooted in the logical premise that government was intended to express the sovereign will of the people, but the institutions of government - parliament, the monarchy - were products of a history of reasonable compromises between two different institutions set up by sovereign will. The Whigs were not Levellers. The Earl of Shaftesbury, a leading Whig, assigned a primary role in government to the nobility.<sup>20</sup> The Whigs were unwilling to go back to first principles and risk civil war and the horrors and political uncertainties that conflict produced when they first argued for the exclusion of the Papist James from the throne. The people were to be allowed a role in government, but according to the guidance of their betters. With the loss or destruction of John Locke's First Treatise on Government, the Second Treatise on Government was read as the justification for the Glorious Revolution of 1688 rather than an argument for why and how one candidate for the monarchy could be excluded from taking up his position in favour of another candidate. Locke became the prime philosophical foundation for Liberalism rather than a strong Whig.<sup>21</sup>

"In the coming of the American Revolution 'men sought liberty, knowing what they sought,' as Lord Acton pointed out. Instead of persuing 'some sensible object,' Americans challenged the Whig equation of morality and expediency by refusing to adjust their conduct to the familiar conventions of opposition politics. The American revolutionairies 'claimed to draw from the pure wells of Whiggism,' wrote Acton. 'But they carried Whiggism from the stages of compromise to the crowning stage of principle.' In England the Whig mentality led statesmen to 'the belief that the sordid element alone prevailed in the colonies,' an element that, had it prevailed, could have been accommodated by urging colonists to consider their economic interests, weigh the consequences of their political actions, and concede to the familiar processes of negotiation and compromise. But by endowing political ideas with moral significance, the American Revolution stood as a reproach to Whig politics and ushered in a new episode of modern liberalism. 'The Whigs governed by compromise. The Liberal begins the reign of ideas.'" <sup>22</sup>

While many Canadians are embarrassed by the overreaching pride of Americans and their constant exhibition of their belief that they can accomplish what they will provided they will it hard enough and pursue goals with a disciplined application of rational analysis, the Canadian belief in 'sweet reason', in the reasonable rather than the rational per se, has its own detractors. A Canada constituted on a policy of accommodation rather than an elaboration of principles was

derided by liberal continentalists like Frank Underhill. "This seeming incapacity for ideas, or rather this habit of carrying on our communal affairs at a level at which ideas never quite emerge into an articulate life of their own, has surely impoverished our Canadian politics."<sup>23</sup> In this critical view, rationality that is not an instrument of determination and purpose, is 'sweet reason' and saccharine. To be reasonable in this sense is to be 'wimpy'. Pierre Trudeau replaced Whiggism motif as the dominant motif of Canadian politics with Liberalism.

If we attribute the traditional "reasonableness" of Canadians simply to the particular result necessitated in a state with **two** founding nations with two quite different outlooks and/or to the encounter of the Canadians with the harsh northern landscape which they could **not** conquer but only adapt to it, then we explain this rational pattern in historicist terms. But if we take it to be a universal possibility and an ideal to strive for by all humans, then, though it emerged as a product of a unique history and set of circumstances, it is held out as a universal potential and ideal for the world.

Unfortunately, as we observe before us, countries founded on accommodation and mutual advantage have a much greater propensity to unravel than countries founded on natural rights and service to history and high principle. America was founded on a faith in the sovereign will of the people in which each person was endowed with reason and the ability to ascertain how to use that reason to achieve the high purpose given to Americans as both their inalienable right and their duty to defend and serve. This combination of hard realism and lofty idealism is a very different conception of reason than negotiations between governments at one level and one's mother country at another level. For in the realm of sweet reasonableness, when you grow up and the siblings leave their mother's protective embrace and more particularly, when 'mutual advantage' may no longer be mutual or advantageous given the enticements of other alternatives, and when there exists no higher purpose to hold the family together,<sup>24</sup> reasonableness may be inadequate to the task of holding a country together. Reasonableness as an instrument of accommodation is no match for formal rationality as an instrument to carry out a task which it is one's historical destiny to fulfill and which requires determination and resolve.

The difference between formal rationality and reasonableness can be understood further through the classical distinction between scientific reasoning, or *episteme*, and practical judgement. The latter is concerned with beliefs, not facts, and adjudicates on the basis of experience. If, however, the value principles are presumed to be self evident

truths in themselves, or even through the eyes of the sceptic, as convictions of passion not subject to alteration by means of rational discourse, then rationality is and can be scientific since it is simply the calculation of the best means to achieve a given end or set of values which require no debate or judgement.

## **Rationality and Values**

Before we presume that reason is simply an accommodation between two different value perspectives or, alternatively, is simply a calculation to achieve a set of given values already in place, it might be worthwhile to consider a view of reason as a mode of determining which values are best and not just what the best instrument is to achieve a set of values upon which there is already an assumed agreement or even what to do in a given situation, knowing full well that the decision will have repercussions on one's values. To undertake the task of analyzing a possible process of reasoning to determine which values to adopt, unlike Hume, we presume that process must be done from the standpoint of an individual *in history*, for there is no absolute standpoint from which to adjudicate values. Each of us comes with our individual and collective sets of beliefs carrying the baggage of our particular histories. The issue is whether, given our rooted perspectives and values, knowledge and debate can be relevant to determining those values and the priorities among them. To put it another way, given that we come to a problem with a given set of interests and values, is a critical analysis of those norms and values relevant to the conception of rationality?

We can claim that values can be critically assessed for their inconsistencies and lack of coherence. "Rationality is not properly predicated of individual norms or goals of behaviour; it is a feature of the interrelationships of a set of such norms or goals...Conversely, we do not usually need or look for explanations of rational behaviour other than its conformity with the appropriate rules or norms, provided, however, that these norms themselves constitute a coherent set and do not require explanations of their own inconsistencies or of the ability of those who follow them to sustain them despite contradictions."<sup>25</sup> In this account, values only become questionable when formal logical criteria are breached. And only then by abandoning rational explanation in favour of irrational explanation.

The problem of detecting any inconsistencies is, however, more difficult than it first appears because value itself is an equivocal notion, as Aristotle made clear. When we say apples are good, and rosy cheeks are good, and health is good, we often mean three very different things. Apples are good because they contribute to our well being. Exercise is said to be good in the same sense. But when we say rosy cheeks are



good, we do not mean that rosy cheeks contribute to our well being but, rather, that rosy cheeks are a **sign** of our well being. Good which refers to something which contributes to something else which is good, or good which is a sign of something else which is good, are both very different senses of good than that which is considered good-in-itself, such as well being.

For reasoning to be relevant to a choice over values and not just over the best instrument, one value must be considered fundamental. At the same time, that value must be recognized to be context-based and without any absolute status. In other words, though reason may be relevant to making choices about values, there may be no general principles or norms by which to make that adjudication.

The problem is whether something like the preservation of international law and the integrity of sovereign states can be considered something which is good-in-itself, or something which is good because it preserves international peace, or is simply good because it serves as a smoke detector such that breaches of international law merely trigger an alarm that a tyranny has breached the norms of acceptable conduct in international affairs.

We have to first determine what value we attach to a value that is held. It seems clear that in the American value structure, international law is **not** something inherently good, but can serve as a trip wire. International law may also be considered a contributing factor to international peace. Even the latter is not a good-in-itself which, in the American lexicon, usually refers back to the freedom and happiness of the individual. Whether you agree or not, to engage in a rational consideration of what is good, you must start from some fundamental presumption of what is good-in-itself. In the American Congress, this was not a subject of direct debate.

To consider the status of values as inherent to the conception of rationality, using the criterion of consistency, does not help if the value is held in two quite distinctive equivocal meanings. For example, upholding the centrality of the UN but regarding breaches of international law regarding the sovereignty of nation-states as only a trip wire seems, at least on the surface, to be inconsistent, whereas believing that breaches in international law of this type is virtually a *causus belli* may be consistent. Do we then presume rationality and, therefore, that the Americans believed that the breach of international law was a cause, or at least a condition contributing to the breakdown of order, and not simply a sign of real future danger?

In this case, I suggest the evidence may be stronger in support of the latter interpretation, that Americans merely regard a breach in international law as a signalling device to

attend to the danger of a real threat and was not in itself as a cause of military action. But if that were the case, then the action would be deemed irrational and require an irrational explanation according to the Izenberg formula. A finding of inconsistency can be used to select from among several meanings referring to the same value to favour consistency without weighing the evidence fairly. Instead of the inconsistency being used to fathom the agent's value priorities at a different level or to explore the tensions in the agent's value system, a presumption is immediately made that the agent is irrational just because he was inconsistent.

There is another problem. Though individual liberty and happiness may be at the bedrock of American values, it is not always relevant in guiding a decision about what to do. In some contexts it is irrelevant. For the pilots captured by the Iraqis, survival may be the top value. To survive, it may be critical to engage in what might, in another context, be considered a meaningless task, in order to demonstrate some small area of control over one's life. It may also be worthwhile complying with the requests of torturers to utter publicly the words forced upon you rather than resist to one's last breath instead of accepting the indignity of following a coercive order under torture. The positive value may just as well occur in nuanced forms of resistance as in outright confrontations.

Values are equivocal. Inconsistencies may be more revealing about the agent's set of values than any presumption of irrationality. Values, even the highest ones, are only relevant to certain contexts and have a different status and priority in other contexts. Is there another way they can be approached as an integral element of what is considered to be rational?

There is a radically different tact we can take to approaching an evaluation of the value content of a belief system as part of the requirements of a rational analysis. Our object as the interpreter is not to evaluate the values **nor** presume they are fixed and given, but to get closer to the evolving values of the agent by refusing both to reify them or to evaluate them as if one was in a position to do so. Our responsibility as an interpreter is to attend to the debate, to avoid imposing on the debate our own prejudices while approaching the analysis of the debate with the expectations that must be there if we are well trained scholars. "For it is necessary to keep one's gaze fixed on the thing throughout all the distractions that the interpreter will constantly experience in the process and which originate in himself."<sup>26</sup> The evaluation that goes on will be the reassessment of our own expectations and the evaluation of our own values as we remain open to any transformation of values revealed by the debate.

A more radical version of *critique* emerged in the Frankfurt school. Inherent in the presumptions we brought to bear on our analysis were presumptions of freedom and autonomy which are both employed in evaluating the rationality of the beliefs and actions of agents and were themselves transformed through the analysis to a higher level of conceptual clarification and realization. In fact, critique itself entails a reevaluation of a conception of rationality and the abandonment of freedom and autonomy when rationality is reduced to calculation of the best means to achieve an end assuming a **given** set of values. "Having given up autonomy, reason has become an instrument. In the formalistic aspect of subjective reason, stressed by positivism, its unrelatedness to objective content is emphasized; in its instrumental aspect, stressed by pragmatism, its surrender to heteronomous contents is emphasized. Reason has become completely harnessed to the social process. Its operational value, its role in the domination of men and nature, has been made the sole criterion."<sup>27</sup>

What are the characteristics of freedom and rationality if they were not denied by the instrumentalist paradigm? "The individual must be free to acquire the means to attain his end: self-preservation and growth. However, this kind of freedom is variable to the highest degree: in history, it ranges from the mere physical ability to accept and use the means of subsistence, to the power of domination and exploitation. And it includes a rich freedom of choice within a strong framework of repression, of unfreedom."<sup>28</sup> Inner freedom or freedom of conscience always remained inalienable. Freedom of thought, however, since it is only freedom if it is translated into expression, "has been politically restricted throughout history - if not by direct censorship then by withholding, from the larger population, the intellectual and material means which would enable them to develop and express free thought."<sup>29</sup> So we must be alert to the degree freedom of expression is restricted in what can be said in the debate and how it is said and, if it is restricted, we must try to account for those restrictions and measure their impact on the debate.

But we should not make any presumptions that there are restrictions or define the nature of those restrictions in advance nor presume their role is to enhance repression and serve the lords of exploitation. Otherwise reason becomes a tool again, but this time a tool for the worst of all manipulators, dogmatism.

"Reason involved in the argument against dogmatism has definitely taken up this interest as its own - it does not define the moment of decision as external to its sphere. Rather, the decisions of the subjects are measured rationally against the one objective decision, which is required by the

interest of reason itself. Reason has not yet renounced the will to the rational."<sup>30</sup>

Was the debate in Congress simply a device to manipulate the public in support of the war? Or was the debate directed towards raising the consciousness of America, to enlightenment, to human beings who live with one another and must achieve a modicum of common understanding? Was the debate directed towards enhancing reasonableness and enabling human beings to act in concert using speech as the mode of communication and not coercion of any type?

The key measure of that emancipation will be the degree to which dogmatism was overcome since dogmatism, if it pervades the whole thought process, needs none of the external constraints that coercion frequently employs. To what degree were those engaged in the debate devoted to overcoming dogmatism and making the advancement of the cause of reason a central objective? That kind of test is not applicable to debates among intellectuals because this was not a thought exercise. This was not a test of cognitive capacity, but a productive debate which had, as a direct outcome, action.

To the degree the debate was rational, to that degree it had to challenge the most basic, inherited beliefs of Americans that have become reified as an ideology which no longer allows those values to be subjected to a microscopic critical examination. To the degree those values were just basic axioms from which to deduce what the best course of action was, to that extent dogmatism ruled. The values of America had to be up for grabs. To the degree they were, then the debate was rational in this higher sense. It would not then just be a debate to choose the best means to achieve a defined goal.

As we shall see in our analysis of the debate, the rhetoric paid lip service to the belief that it was just that - a debate over the best means to achieve an agreed end. But the content of the debate belied that formulation, thereby undermining, at least in part, the foundational character of that formulation. To the degree the presumption of instrumentality was not overtly challenged, to that degree emancipation was put off. To the degree the behaviour was a debate about instrumentality per se and a challenge to basic values, even though unacknowledged, to that degree the debate was rational in this higher sense.

### **Rationality and Rationalization**

Jurgen Habermas distinguishes four levels of rationalization, the first two levels of which exclude norms from the argument while the next two levels subordinate so-called irrational values to technological procedures.<sup>31</sup> To what extent was the debate based on scientific predictions which

*prevented a consideration of the value issues at stake. To that degree we had a first level rationalization. Rationality was reduced to efficacy.*

But when the debate was whether one technique - sanctions - was better than another technique - the use of military force, but the evidence for the efficacy of either was inconclusive, then victory in the debate did not depend on the scientific evidence per se, but on which conclusion received better support according to the rules of decision making. Given a set of goals and a set of norms **and** given the facts and predictions we have, however inconclusive, rationality is the process of following second order decision norms to reach a conclusion.

In both of the above cases, the values themselves are not subject to debate. This does not mean they are not being debated, only that the debaters do not acknowledge that that is what the debate is about. On the third level of rationalization, there is an acknowledgement in the debate that the decision is being made in the context of Saddam Hussein, defined already as the opponent, who has his own values and self-interest at stake in opposition to those conducting the debate. The values are acknowledged. But the debate represses a consideration of the validity of Saddam's values and interests and relegates them to precategorization as irrational. At stake is the survival of the American value system, which is seen to be at risk, but which must be defended at minimal risk in terms of the sacrifice of the lives of American soldiers.

There is, however, a fourth level of rationalization which is much more subtle. In the decision model, as we shall see, the goals are set up as fixed entities. The calculation of the likely consequences following one choice rather than another is done as if that calculation had no effect on reformulating the goals. But a proper feedback system, such as those already incorporated in much of the high tech equipment employed in the war, would recognize that the analysis and reanalysis of the data and the likely outcomes will reflect back and alter the goals. As the cybernetic system becomes operative, however, the norms that went into the reified decision model remain reified even as the goals are altered and modified. There is no recognition that the process itself of deciding and the substantive content fed into the process of decision making also has a profound effect on the value presumptions. The values are not inert. They are effected by the debate and by the actions that follow.

Rationality serves the cause of reason to the degree it undermines each of the above four levels of rationalization and grapples directly with the issue of values.

1. R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 213.

2. William Dray (1957), p. 9 & 128.

3. cf. Rex Martin, Historical Explanation: Reenactment and Practical Inference, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977, pp. 41-42.

4. cf. R. Taylor (1966). The more normal practice as in Louch (1966) and Melden (1961) is to distinguish bodily movements, mere physical events, from actions which include both events and thoughts as part of the depiction.

5. Michael E. Bratman, Intentions, Plans and Practical Reason, Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 1987, p. 5.

6. G.E.M. Anscombe, Intention, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963, p. 9.

7. cf. Donald Davidson, Essays on Actions and Events, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. cf. Michael Bratman, "Davidson's Theory of Intention", in Bruce Vermazen and Merrill B. Hintikka, eds., Essays on Davidson: Actions and Events, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985 and an expanded version of the same essay in Ernest Lepore and Brian McLaughlin, eds., Actions and Events: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985. See also Alvin Goldman, A Theory of Human Action, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970; Bratman claims Goldman implicitly makes the same disjunction.

8. cf. Bernard Williams, "Internal and External Reasons", in Ross Harrison, ed., Rational Action: Studies in Philosophy and Social Science: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 17-28.

Williams provides an extended critique of the conception of external reasons.

9. Many decisions 'to do', that is, action-decisions, are not synonymous with the action itself. For example, if several boys, as a prank, paint glue on the soles of another student's shoes so that he is prevented from altering his position, he may decide to go to the corner for a candy bar without being

capable of carrying out the action. If an agent makes an action decision, then only external or irrational factors prevent the individual from carrying out the decision. The decision is immediately followed by the action unless there is an intervention which is beyond the control of the agent. This is the efficacy premise that Dray refers to as asserting something about the agent's powers and opportunities. cf William Dray (1967), pp. 195-6.

10. cf. Maryla Zaleska, "The Effects of Discussion on Groups and Individual Choices Among Bets", European Journal of Social Psychology, 4:2, 1974 where the discussion which we introduce later of influence becomes a factor which alters the individual risk decision when there is interaction in a group decision.

11. Allan Gibbard, Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgement, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 44. The whole of chapter 4 and 5 should be read as a very interesting discussion of making normative decisions.

12. For a discussion of normative political power in the international arena, see Haskell Fain, Normative Politics and the Community of Nations, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987

13. cf. William Cavala, "Changing the Rules Changes the Game: Party Reform and the 1972 California Delegation to the Democratic National Convention", The American Political Science Review, LXVIII:1, March, 1974. He argues that the rule changes at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago led to critical changes in the structure of the US Democratic Party.

14. cf. S. Z. Nagi, "Gate-keeping Decisions in Science Organizations: When Validity Fails", Human Organization, 33:1, Spring, 1974, pp. 47-48. See also Geoffrey Vickers, "Values, Norms and Policies", Policy Sciences, 4 (1973), pp. 103-111. The least flexible mechanism focused on **conditioning** the responses to anticipated events rather than adjusting the anticipations and the decisions to the situation that emerges. This inflexible system is akin to biological or innate control systems and are to be contrasted with normative feedback systems which take the reverse tack. A flexible and efficacious control system is one controlled by norms which operate to reduce discrepancies between the techniques adopted, the results that emerge and the results anticipated.

15. Paul H. Conn, David B. Meltz and Charles Press, "The Concept of Rationality", Polity, VI:2, Winter, 1973, p. 225.

16. For a more detailed and expanded discussion of the two sides of Authority, influence and power, see my article, "Authority, Influence, and Power: A Discussion", Philosophy of Social Science, December, 1976. The discussion relates the distinctions to different approaches to political philosophy.

17. For models of rational or intentional explanation, there exists a large body of literature, much of it contentious, particularly over whether the reasons logically entail the decision to do the action (subjective idealists) or in some sense are construed as part of the causes of the action itself (positivists). For a focussed discussion on the dispute between reasons and causes of actions, see G.H. von Wright, Explanation and Understanding (Ithaca, N.Y.: 1971) and Practical Reason (Oxford, 1983) and Rex Martin's analysis and critique in Historical Explanation: Re-enactment and Practical Inference (Ithaca, N.Y., 1977) and "Von Wright on Explanation and Understanding" in History and Theory, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, 1990, pp. 205-233 or Morton White, Foundations of Historical Knowledge (New York, 1965). See also Essays on Explanation and Understanding, ed. J. Manninen and R. Tuomela, eds. Explanation and Understanding (Dordrecht, 1976).

18. C.B. Macpherson, Democratic Theory, p. 5.

19. J.M.S. Careless, Brown of the Globe, Vol. I, p. 326.

20. cf. J.G.A. Pocock, "Machiavelli, Harrington, and Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century," William and Mary Quarterly, 22, 1965, pp. 549-583.

21. cf. Edmund S. Morgan, Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988, p. 105. See also pp. 119-120 where Morgan argues that a political system, for Locke, could only be dissolved by foreign invasion or conquest. The dissolution of government was not equivalent to the dissolution of the polity itself. When those in charge abused their powers, as interpreted by the sovereign people, the government was reassigned to other Persons, or even new forms, without returning society to a State of Nature. (cf. John Locke, The Second Treatise of Government, the final chapter.) A disabled monarch was simply removed to be replaced by another. John Locke did not intend to become the philosophical foundation for Liberal Republicanism.

22. John P. Diggins, The Lost Soul of American Politics: Virtue, Self-Interest, and the Foundations of Liberalism, New York: Basic Books, p. 28. The quotations from Lord Acton are taken from "The American Revolution," Lectures in Modern History (New York: Meridian, 1960), pp. 287-295. See also



Gertrude Himmelfarb, "The American Revolution in the Theory of Lord Acton," Journal of Modern History, 21, 1949, pp. 293-312.

23. F.W. Underhill, "The Liberal Tradition in Canada", in Approaches to Canadian History, eds., Cook, Brown and Berger.

24. Canadians lack an "unchanging agreement as to the identity of the Sovereign - in other words, that a principle of legitimacy should be built up and receive general respect." Richard de Jouvenal, Sovereignty, p. 5. For Canadians, the issue has always been the legitimacy of its **existence**, not its government. Legitimacy is more a matter of practice than of principle. Governments **act** legitimately. Its legitimacy does not arise out of the means by which it was constituted.

25. Gerald Izenberg in "Psychohistory and Intellectual History", History and Theory, XIV:2, 1975, p. 144.

26. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, New York: The Seabury Press, 1975, p. 236.

27. Max Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason, New York: The Seabury Press, 1947; 1974, p. 21.

28. Herbert Marcuse, "Freedom and the Historical Imperative", in Studies in Critical Philosophy, Boston: Beacon Press, 1972, p. 212.

29. Ibid, p. 213.

30. Jurgen Habermas, Theory and Practice, Boston: Beacon Press, 1973, p. 254.

31. Ibid, p. 270.